



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **The Eco-Whale Alliance celebrates the 5th season of ecoresponsible whale watching.**

**Québec, June 1, 2015** - The Eco-Whale Alliance celebrates its fifth season for the eco-responsible practices of whale-watching activities in the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park.

The Eco-Whale Alliance is proud to share its greatest successes:

- Successful dialogue with the whale watching industry, federal and provincial governments and non-profit organizations;
- Creation of the Eco-Whale Fund for research and education on whales;
- Voluntary commitment of member companies in a continuous improvement process, including a program of mystery clients;
- Contribution to education and conservation.

Member companies and their employees contribute to achieving the objectives of the Eco-Whale Alliance through their commitment in providing unique and enriching excursions, practiced in the utmost respect of the whales. The marine park visitors can encourage the efforts of Eco-Whale Alliance by choosing a sea excursion company identified by the new logo.



This alliance consists of whale watching tour operators, the Group for Research and Education on Marine Mammals (GREMM), and co-managers of the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park: Parks Canada and Parcs Québec.

For more information: [www.eco-baleine.ca](http://www.eco-baleine.ca)

### **QUOTES**

*« Our goal is to become the best place in the world for responsible whale watching. To achieve this, we are focussing is on research to improve our practices and train captains and naturalists in order to provide enriched interpretive content, while adopting better behaviour offshore. This allows us to offer customers a high quality experience based on a sustainable development approach and in-depth knowledge»*, says **Yan Hamel**, President and CEO of **Croisières AML**.

*« The Eco-Whale Alliance has reached an unprecedented level of cooperation in conservation and education efforts among the different players in the industry»*, confirms **Daniel Langlois**, co-director of the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park at **Parks Canada**.

*« The mystery clients program allows us to track our progress towards achieving the objectives of the Alliance. The companies lend themselves to this exercise with a great deal of collaboration»*, says **Jérôme Gouron**, co-director of the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park at **Parcs Québec**.

« Since its creation, the *Eco-Whale Fund*, supported by the contributions of Alliance businesses, has allowed us to maintain the monitoring program of large rorqual whales, an essential tool for us to understand and better protect the whales », concludes **Robert Michaud of the GREMM**.

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## **Facts in brief**

### **General**

- In 2010 an idea was brought forth to bring together whale-watching tour operators, the Group for Research and Education on Marine Mammals (GREMM) and the co-managers of the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park (Parks Canada and Parcs Québec).
- Recognizing the growing demand for tourism activities with a minimum impact on the environment, members of the Eco-Whale Alliance took a positive turn focused on collaboration, to develop and implement the best practices in the industry.
- The member companies of Eco-Whale Alliance receive training for captains and naturalists offered by Parks Canada, share the knowledge gained from research projects conducted by the GREMM and the teams of the Marine Park, as well as interpretive and communication material developed by and for the members of Eco-Whale Alliance.
- Every week, the GREMM team produces a newsletter which provides an overview of the whales in the Marine Park. These “stories”, supported by the results of scientific projects, are then shared with visitors.
- A book bringing together these portraits and summarizing the results of 20 years of research for conservation will be on sale this summer for the benefit of the Eco-Whale Fund.

### **Eco-Whale Fund**

- The Eco-Whale Fund, administered by the Wildlife Foundation of Québec, has already injected more than \$ 110,000 in scientific monitoring and educational projects, valued at over \$350,000.

### **Mystery Clients**

- The pilot program of mystery clients began in 2014 and allows the Eco-Whale Alliance to establish and solidify the first indicators that will be measured in 2015. Called “Progress Monitoring”, the project, initiated and run by Parcs Québec in collaboration with Parks Canada, aims essentially to measure the level of achievement of the objectives set forth by the Alliance.

- Mystery clients, trained by Parcs Québec and Parks Canada, are sent on tour boats to observe specific aspects of their visit experience, including some notions of interpretation and perceived navigation behaviours.
- The results are sent the following week to the tour operators. The feedback is direct and used to adjust their practices along the way. In addition to these mystery visits, there is a self-assessment of the captains at the end of the season as well as a review by Parks Canada wardens.